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ABSTRACT

The report evaluates the impact of paraprofessionals in a program of planned change, the Cornell-OEO Project in South Brooklyn, which employed and trained local women to serve as family assistants to increase the competence and knowledge of low-income homemakers in the area. Findings indicate that programs where paraprofessionals communicate knowledge can have broad impact, both on the contacted individuals and on their community involvement. Personalized interaction seems to be a significant stimulus to change, perhaps because it involves paraprofessionals who are closer to the people, more sensitive to their problems, and better able to establish rapport than professional outsiders. Programs of planned change may have new opportunities for success by recognizing the role of paraprofessionals in the dynamics of social change. (MS)

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CORNELL OEO PROJECT

AN EXPLORATION IN URBAN EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Supplementary Report No. 4

Paraprofessionals: Planned and Unplanned Change in a Low-Income Community

Mildred Konan

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PARAPROFESSIONALS: PLANNED AND UNPLANNED CHANGE IN A LOW-INCOME COMMUNITY

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AN OVERVIEW OF THE CORNELL-OEO PROJECT IN SOUTH BROOKLYN

The Cornell-OEO Project in South Brooklyn, N.Y. was an attempt to develop and adapt the traditional methods of Cooperative Extension to serve better the needs of the urban poor. It was a demonstration project, undertaken jointly by the New York State College of Home Economics at Cornell University and the New York State Office of Economic Opportunity,[1] with a commitment to training, service, and evaluative research. It was funded by the New York State Legislature for a two and one-half year period, from November, 1968 through June, 1971.

The major goal of the project was to improve the competence of low-income homemakers in the areas of purchasing, budgeting, and home management. Additional goals were to improve the feelings of self-worth of these homemakers and other members of their families, to improve their ability to make use of various community services, and to mobilize some community activity to increase the range of services available. During the project, 38 women from the community were trained to be teaching homemakers and employed by the project as soon as their training was completed. The title they chose for themselves was "family assistant," and the range of their activities was considerably broader than that of teaching homemakers. In the later stages of the project a major goal became enhancement of the ability of the family assistants to take leadership roles in the community after the project was over. To this end they were given a final round of training in various human relations and leadership skills during the last six months of the project.

Physical Setting and Project Administration

The specific area served by the project includes roughly 60,000 people in and around two New York City public housing projects, Gowanus Houses and Wyckoff Gardens. The neighborhood is ethnically mixed, not in neatly balanced thirds as originally believed, but with about two-fifths of the families black, two fifths Puerto Rican (or Spanish-speaking), and the remainder from other ethnic groups. An apartment was rented in Wyckoff Gardens

[1] The names were subsequently changed to the New York State College of Human Ecology and the New York State Office of Community Affairs.

for use as a teaching and service facility, and also to provide office space for some staff members.

The first five months of the project were devoted mainly to working out administrative and facility arrangements and to recruiting key staff. The project director, Albert J. Harris, Jr., had been a program director at Colony House, the major community center in the project area. The training director, Miss Suzanne Matsen, had been an assistant professor in consumer education at the College. She moved to New York City in the late fall to initiate preparations for the project. The research director, Edward Ostrander, an associate professor at the College, remained in Ithaca where most members of the research staff were located. Other key staff included a research associate in Brooklyn and several group workers who supervised the activities of the family assistants.

Training and Service

The first group of 12 trainees was recruited in March, 1969. In a little over a year four groups or waves, each composed of eight to 12 women, were trained. Each wave participated in a half-day, eight-week course covering 168 hours of field and classroom training. The training content they covered included food and nutrition, child development, interior decoration, money management, family health, consumer protection, the family life cycle, and skills in working with families. The curriculum content and manner of presentation evolved from one wave to the next. Revisions were based on the suggestions of the trainees, initiative of the instructors, and availability of appropriate outside personnel.

Women who were graduated from the course were given the title, "family assistant." After graduation, family assistants visited community homes to work with families on a one-to-one basis. In the service phase, the family assistants' workweek was officially 20 hours. Twelve hours were to be spent working with families and the remaining eight hours devoted to in-service training. At first family assistants recruited their families by going door-to-door and explaining the project services. Once contact was made with families the urgency of some problems often resulted in involvement far exceeding the 12 hour workweek. It became evident from the outset that many of

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Evaluative Research

The research component of the project had three major objectives: (1) to collect and interpret data useful to the project administration in revising training plans and priorities for service activities; (2) to maintain systematic records of project activities that could be used in later analysis of the project as a social enterprise--more specifically, as a venture in university-community cooperation; and (3) to assess the impact of the project on its Brooklyn staff, the families they served, and on the surrounding community.

The major obstacle to these goals was the intense distrust of all types of research activity by most of the paraprofessional members of the Brooklyn staff. Many family assistants freely voiced the suspicion that the Ithaca-based research staff had ulterior motives and would exploit them and the families with whom they worked. They expressed resentment over the long history of research reports that have highlighted derogatory information about minority groups. Such inquiries and reports are seen both as invasion of privacy and as exploitation of people in unfortunate circumstances. In the experience of the family assistants, research studies seldom if ever lead to any observable benefit to the subjects of research.

Two major approaches were used by the research staff in attempting to deal with this distrust. The first was an agreement that there would be no systematic attempt to collect research data outside project goals. Project research data would come through reports made by family assistants and records of Brooklyn training sessions and staff conferences. Any exception to this rule would be with the approval of the staff and participants. An early exception was made with the agreement of participants to enable a graduate student member of the research staff to collect data for her thesis.

The second major approach was a series of visits to Brooklyn by members of the Ithaca research staff, and a series of conferences and guided interviews in both Brooklyn and Ithaca with key members of the Brooklyn staff.

These approaches were successful in making possible the regular collection of research data throughout the life of the project; however they represented a compromise that was not very satisfactory to any of the parties

concerned. In particular, getting usable reports from the family assistants proved to be far more difficult than the research staff had expected. Nevertheless, the family assistants eventually made reports on most of their dealings with families, and the research staff developed a reasonably objective system for recording major problems faced by families and the major types of service given to them.

Research Findings

Probably the most important lesson learned was that the project actually could be carried out, including all three components of training, service, and evaluative research. The project has provided important evidence that it is indeed possible to adapt the traditional methods of Cooperative Extension to serve the needs of the urban poor. The project has also indicated that the major modification required is the employment of paid paraprofessionals to work with individuals and families on a one-to-one basis. Though this adds tremendously to the cost of extension work, it seems to be essential for comprehensive, family-oriented programs in poverty areas.

The research efforts of the project have shown once again the tremendous gulf that lies between the goals and assumptions of middle class academic people--including both those professionally trained in Cooperative Extension and those professionally trained in research--and the goals and assumptions of the urban poor and their developing community leaders. More importantly, perhaps, the project has shown that under favorable circumstances it is possible to reach a fair degree of mutual understanding, and to develop arrangements that make possible cooperative efforts toward the goals of each group. These arrangements are difficult to work out, and they require considerable modification of the initial assumptions of all groups concerned.

Lessons Learned

These "lessons" learned from the whole project experience seem more firmly established than any specific "research findings." The most important research finding is probably the discovery that families with a considerable number of pressing problems are unable to utilize help in the areas of home management and consumer education, even when this help is offered on a one-to-one basis. These families often did benefit from direct personal help by the family assistants. The commonest kinds of personal help were: taking

a family member to a medical clinic or social agency, serving as an interpreter to non-Spanish-speaking agency personnel, interceding for a family with welfare or educational authorities.

The impact of the Cornell-OEO Project proved very difficult to assess. It was most dramatic--although probably not lasting--on those individuals for whom family assistants provided direct personal help with some immediate pressing problem. It is likely that in many families there were more lasting results from the educational efforts of the family assistants--mainly in the areas of better purchasing practices and greater ability to make use of existing community services. It is difficult to document these results in the absence of a follow-up study.

The staff believes that the project has had a major impact on the self-image and social competence of the majority of family assistants employed in it, though this would be very difficult to document objectively. There is no doubt, however, that a number of family assistants have gone on to jobs involving more responsibility than any they had held before participating in the Cornell-OEO Project, and that others are playing more active roles in community affairs than they did previously. The enduring impact on the general South Brooklyn community can only be assessed in the years to come.

PARAPROFESSIONALS: PLANNED AND UNPLANNED CHANGE IN A LOW-INCOME COMMUNITY

Introduction

Following the declaration of the War on Poverty in 1964, numerous programs of planned change were implemented and efforts were made to involve the poor themselves in decisions involving their own destiny. In many communities, low-income residents were trained and employed as paraprofessionals, assisting professional workers in the implementation of programs.

Several authors have suggested that paraprofessional workers have an advantage in stimulating social change because they are more closely linked to the people and their problems than are the professionals.[1] This report[2] evaluates the impact of paraprofessionals in one program of planned change, the Cornell OEO Project. The evidence presented offers hope to those who believe paraprofessional workers can make significant contributions to the dynamics of planned change.

The Cornell OEO Project

The Cornell OEO Project, undertaken by the New York State College of Human Ecology and funded by the New York State Office of Economic Opportunity was designed to increase the competence and knowledge of low-income homemakers in the areas of home management and consumer buying skills. Successive groups

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1. For example Marshall B. Clinard, Slums and Community Development (New York: The Free Press, 1966). See also Arthur Pearl and Frank Riessman, New Careers for the Poor (New York: Free Press, 1965) and Frank Riessman and Hermine I. Popper, Up From Poverty (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).
2. In this brief report, research techniques and research findings can only be summarized. For details, see Mildred Morton Konan, "Personalized Interaction and Change in a Low-Income Community," Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Rural Sociology, Cornell University, 1971. The research reported here represents only one part of this larger study which included a discussion of the broader issues of community structure and strategies which induce change.

of low-income homemakers were employed and trained as paraprofessionals ("Family Assistants")[3] for eight weeks. Following graduation, Family Assistants worked in the community, visiting homemakers to communicate the consumer information they had acquired and help with various problems which the homemakers might have.

The Community

The community selected for implementation of this action program is referred to as "South Brooklyn." It includes two public housing projects, Wyckoff Gardens and Gowanus, as well as most of the immediately surrounding area. Residents may be classified as newcomers or long-time residents. Newcomers tend to be young, white, professional families who have purchased and renovated brownstones in some sections of the community. The Cornell OEO Project was involved primarily with long-time residents, the majority of whom were black and Spanish-American,[4] residing in public housing or run-down brownstones.

Purpose of this Study

The Cornell OEO Project was intended to provide a medium through which the knowledge and expertise of Cornell University personnel in the areas of consumer education and home management could be transmitted to Family Assistants who would in turn extend this knowledge to other low-income homemakers in the community. The goal of the evaluative research component, as stated in the project proposal, was to discover whether and under what conditions such changes in knowledge occurred. In this report certain

3. "Family Assistant" is the title given to paraprofessional workers in this project.
4. In Gowanus Houses, built after World War II, the distribution of families by ethnic group is: 62 percent black; 33 percent Spanish-American; 5 percent white. Wyckoff Gardens, which has been in operation since 1967, has greater ethnic balance: approximately 40 percent black; 35 percent Spanish-American; 25 percent white.

unplanned consequences are also investigated. Specifically, an answer was sought to the question: Does face-to-face interaction between paraprofessional neighbors and the homemakers they visit lead to a) increases in homemaker knowledge and b) other latent consequences of effective personal relations, such as increased involvement in community organizations.

Theoretical Perspective

The expectation that changes in community involvement as well as knowledge would occur was theoretically based in a body of literature which documents the fact that decision-making is not an individual phenomena, but usually occurs within a newwork of personal relationships.[5] Individuals have been shown to be more likely to vote, to try something new or to participate in an event if their friends are doing these things too.

Although community organizing was not a planned part of the Family Assistant role, an effort was made to select homemakers who were interested in helping their neighbors and improving the community. Many of the Family Assistants were already community leaders, involved in a variety of neighborhood groups.[6] Although Family Assistants were expected

5. For example Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications (New York: Free Press, 1960) and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet, "The People's Choice," abridged, American Social Patterns William Petersen, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1956), pp. 119-170.
6. The average rate of participation was more than four organizations per Family Assistant family. Interview data also revealed that seventeen of the twenty-one Family Assistants viewed themselves as "a person who participates in community affairs," rather than "pretty much an ordinary person in the community."

to teach home economics information, it seems likely that community activities and community needs would also be discussed with the homemakers they visited and that such discussion might influence the interest and participation of homemakers in community activities.

The Family Assistant-homemaker relationship is conceptualized as "personalized interaction." It is face-to-face interaction between neighbors, measured in terms of the number of times the Family Assistant visited a homemaker. It is this personalized interaction which was hypothesized to have a positive impact on homemakers in terms of 1) increases in knowledge and 2) increases in community involvement.

The significance of the participation of poor citizens in the decisions and programs involving their own destiny has only recently been recognized.[7] If personalized interaction between a neighborhood's paraprofessionals and homemakers leads to changes in both knowledge and involvement, then a significant role for the paraprofessional in inducing social change will be demonstrated.

One would expect, however, that other factors might also be associated with changes in knowledge and involvement. To minimize the possibility of spurious results, the hypothesized relationship was examined while applying certain control variables.[8]

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7. When OEO legislation was passed in 1964, it included a clause specifying "maximum feasible participation" of the poor in OEO sponsored programs. Since passage of the legislation, this requirement has generated considerable controversy. See Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding (New York: Free Press, 1969) and Hans B.C. Spiegel, ed., Citizen Participation in Urban Development, vol. 1, Concepts and Issues (Washington, D.C.: NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science, 1968).
8. Greater involvement was expected for homemakers who were black and for homemakers whose family situation involved living in two-parent, non-welfare families. Several studies report that blacks in New York

Difficulties Associated with Evaluative Research

Evaluative research attempts to adhere as closely as possible to the principles and procedures of the scientific method. It is research in a particular context but it has no unique methodology of its own.[9] Its context, however, usually poses critical problems.

> It is not so much the principles of research that make evaluation studies difficult, but rather the practical problems of adhering to these principles in the face of administrative considerations. To a far greater extent than the basic researcher, the evaluator loses control over the research situation.[10]

This loss of control may occur in a number of ways. It may be necessary to revise research plans at various times to accommodate them to administrative decisions or to changes in the process under investigation. Although "before-after" research designs have the greatest probability of revealing changes resulting from treatment, it may be most difficult to select suitable and measurable criteria of "effectiveness" at the "before" stage. Given the pioneer nature of most programs of planned change, and the large number of local factors which may influence program development, evaluative research frequently suffers from a lack of knowledge about what is important until it is too late to collect complete data and impossible to achieve a "before-after" design.

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communities are more likely to be involved in politics and grass-roots organizations than Puerto Ricans. One possible explanation is the fact that many Puerto Ricans do not regard New York as a permanent home. See Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Beyond the Melting Pot (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1963).

9. For a detailed discussion of evaluative research see Edward A. Suchman, Evaluative Research (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1967).
10. Ibid., p. 21.

This study encountered these and other difficulties which affected both research plans and effectiveness. From its inception the Project encountered suspicion among local residents. Family Assistants openly and sometimes forcefully questioned why research was necessary. They did not see any direct way in which research could benefit their community and they were not interested in research which would benefit other communities at some later date. Also, they were fearful of betraying the confidence of their friends and neighbors by revealing "confidential" information.[11]

Interviewing, one of the most common means of collecting data, was associated by local residents with bad experiences they had had with welfare investigators and other public officials. Although filling out forms which were used for both record-keeping and research was part of the Family Assistant's job, much supervision and encouragement were needed to assure that this was done. (Even so, forms were sometimes neglected.) Family Assistant reluctance may in part have been related to difficulties of spelling and expressing thoughts on paper, as well as feelings that such record-keeping was unnecessary. These factors reduced the reliability of both interviews and forms as sources of information.

Research Design

In a true experiment, the researcher assigns respondents to experimental and control groups. A "before" measure is taken initially to provide a base line from which change can be evaluated. The experimental group receives treatment; the control group does not. After an appropriate

11. Included in confidential information were such variables as income, occupation of father and place of employment, usually considered essential in most sociological studies.

interval, an "after" measure is taken. Although there is no one best way to design all evaluative studies, this design is frequently regarded as a model from which deviations and compromises are made.

In this research, measures of change were based primarily on the "after-only" reports of respondents. Since the general suspicion of research in the community made it impossible to obtain a true control group of homemakers who had not been visited by Family Assistants, a research design consisting of two experimental groups was used and measurements of change were taken for each group after exposure to treatment (personalized interaction). The first group consisted of homemakers having high personalized interaction with Family Assistants (thirteen or more visits during the year of Project operation). The second group included homemakers having low personalized interaction (twelve or fewer visits).[12]

The characteristics of homemakers with high and low exposure to personalized interaction were compared in search of other factors which might be associated with changes in knowledge or involvement. Data are presented in Table 1. Although the high personalized interaction group contains a higher proportion of homemakers having three or more children and receiving welfare, as well as a smaller proportion of Spanish-speaking persons, none of these differences appears to be statistically significant. Differences in ethnic composition[13] and encouragement to

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12. There were two reasons for choosing thirteen as the cutting point between high and low personalized interaction. First, since a maximum of twenty-five visits were coded, thirteen represented the approximate midpoint. Second, breaking the population at thirteen provided two subgroups sufficiently large for comparison.
13. For ethnic composition, the chi square value approaches significance at $p = .10$.

Table 1 A comparison of characteristics for homemakers in Sample One with high and low exposure to personalized interaction (P.I.)

Proportions who ...	High P.I. N=47	Low P.I. N=37	X^2 significant* ($p < .05$)
Live in public housing	59.6%	56.7%	no
(Number)	(28)	(21)	
Are black	46.7%	27.0%	no**
(Number)	(21)	(10)	
Are female heads of households	42.6%	45.9%	no
(Number)	(20)	(17)	
Speak Spanish only	26.1%	37.8%	no
(Number)	(12)	(14)	
Have three or more children	48.9%	40.5%	no
(Number)	(23)	(15)	
Have children in elementary school	31.9%	31.4%	no
(Number)	(15)	(11)	
Receive welfare	63.8%	52.8%	no
(Number)	(30)	(19)	
Were previously friends of Family Assistants or other staff members	24.4%	19.4%	no
(Number)	(11)	(7)	
Are still receiving service	89.4%	78.4%	no
(Number)	(42)	(29)	
Were encouraged to participate	80.0%	59.3%	no***
(Number)	( )	(16)	

*For a discussion of the application of the chi square test, see Frederick C. Mills, Statistical Methods (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1955), pp. 525-539.

**See footnote 13.

***See footnote 14. Note also that the number of cases for this variable is not comparable to other variables. Responses coded as "qualified" were excluded from the analysis. For example, some Family Assistants indicated that they had encouraged involvement, but the homemaker could not get out for some reason. Others indicated that they had not encouraged involvement because the homemaker was handicapped or unable to participate for some reason.

participate[14] do, however, approach significance. Consequently, these two variables were introduced as control variables.[15]

Although the research design was limited by difficulties which evaluative research frequently encounters, empirical evidence was elaborated upon and supplemented by personal observation[16] and descriptive materials relevant to the time interval in which personalized interaction was occurring.

Samples

Data were available for a population of 224 homemakers in the community who were shown by Project records to have been visited two or more times by Family Assistants. A sample of eighty-four of these homemakers was selected using a random procedure.[17] For purposes of discussion, this group is referred to as Sample One. Information for each homemaker in Sample One was available from two sources. First, Family Assistants were interviewed and answered questions regarding sample homemakers with whom they had worked. Second, demographic data and information for each visit with a homemaker were available from reports Family Assistants had submitted throughout the year.

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14. For encouragement to participate, $p > .05$ but $< .10$. The difference thus approaches significance.
15. Encouragement to participate appears to be an intervening variable in the relationship between personalized interaction and involvement. Since the hypothesized relationship between personalized interaction and increases in homemaker involvement is based on the assumption that encouraging involvement is one part of personalized interaction, subsequent analysis of this relationship will focus on homemakers who were encouraged to participate. This does not apply to analyses of the relationship between personalized interaction and changes in knowledge.
16. The author lived in the community for three months during the summer of 1969 and worked with the research staff at Cornell University through July of 1970, making a number of trips to Brooklyn during this time for data collection.
17. Homemakers living in the Project area who had been visited two or more times were listed in groups for each Family Assistant or Family Assistant team. Listings were then reordered, using a table of random numbers. Resulting lists were used to determine the order in which homemakers would be discussed with each Family Assistant or team.

When statistical methods were used to evaluate the representativeness of this sample of eighty-four as compared with the population, it was found that the sample contained proportionately fewer homemakers who were visited only two or three times and terminated. Since the ongoing process of interaction between homemaker and Family Assistant is the focus of attention, however, the inclusion of fewer terminated cases will not impair results.

It was possible to interview only twenty-two of the eighty-four homemakers directly.[18] For purposes of discussion, this group is referred to as "interviewed homemakers" or Sample Two. Although the small number of cases makes comparison with Sample One difficult, Sample Two appears to include more families living in public housing, more homemakers with three or more children and fewer homemakers under thirty. These initial differences limit the extent to which interview results can be generalized to the population. Consequently, responses of interviewed homemakers will be used only to supplement and illustrate the analysis of Sample One.

Personalized Interaction and Changes in Knowledge

It was expected that homemakers with high exposure to personalized interaction would show increases in knowledge[19] more frequently than those with low exposure to personalized interaction. Data in Table 2 support this prediction. Changes in knowledge were reported for eighty-five percent of the homemakers in the high personalized interaction group, compared with only forty-eight percent for those in the low personalized interaction group.

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18. Interviews were completed for only 22 of the 84 homemakers because of some Family Assistants' refusals to allow anyone to visit their homemakers for interviewing purposes and because several homemakers themselves refused to be interviewed.
19. The variable knowledge is defined broadly to include changes in behavior and outlook which are probably the result of changes in knowledge. Changes in homemaking practices, use of budgeting or decorating ideas and changes in outlook or morale were all coded as changes in knowledge.

Table 2 Changes in knowledge and exposure to personalized interaction for homemakers in Sample One

Changes in Knowledge	Exposure to Personalized Interaction		
	High	Low	Total
Yes	85.1%*	48.6%	69.0%
	(40)	(18)	(58)
No	14.9	51.4	31.0
	(7)	(19)	(26)
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(47)	(37)	(84)

$X^2 = 12.8753$; d.f. = 1; $p < .01$

*In this and subsequent tables, data will be presented in percentages with the number of cases for each cell appearing in brackets under the percentage.

Thus, homemakers receiving thirteen or more visits showed significantly more frequent changes in knowledge than those with fewer visits.

A few examples will help to demonstrate the kinds of changes in knowledge which are represented in Table 2.

> Mrs. A is now beginning to give the children vegetables. She never gave them vegetables before.
>
> Mrs. B used to have a crazy way of shopping. I advised her to see what she had on hand before shopping for food so she wouldn't buy what she already had.
>
> Mrs. C knows how to make good buys now. She feels more confidence in her spending. She doesn't shop at little stores now.
>
> We started working with Mrs. D just after she separated from her husband. We spent a lot of time talking about family problems. She was really depressed. Now, a big change has taken place.[20]

Responses of interviewed homemakers (Sample Two) imply that changes in knowledge may be even more common than Table 2 suggests. Virtually all[21]

20. Selected statements of Family Assistants, April, 1970, personal interviews. There did not seem to be any pattern in the various types of knowledge changes. That is, certain types of knowledge did not appear to be "learned" more readily than others. The diversity of topics covered reflects the diverse interests and needs of the homemakers visited.
21. The two exceptions were both families in which the Family Assistant's work had been mainly cleaning or shopping for a homemaker, rather than interaction directed toward sharing information and skills.

of the interviewed homemakers (one-third of whom were in the low personalized interaction group) indicated changes in knowledge resulting from Family Assistant visits. Most responses indicated specific information which the interviewed homemaker had learned from a Family Assistant. For example:

> We went shopping for children's clothing and the Family Assistant showed me that by paying twenty cents more I could get much better quality.
>
> The Family Assistants told me about door-to-door salesmen and how they try to pressure you about bills.
>
> The Family Assistant talked about different agencies that you can go to for help. I didn't know that Legal Aid and Social Services could help with certain problems.[22]

It appears then that a majority of the homemakers visited by Family Assistants show changes in knowledge. This relationship is not substantially changed by the application of the control variables (ethnic group and family situation). The research findings do suggest, however, that high exposure to personalized interaction is more essential for securing changes among Spanish-American or Spanish-speaking homemakers than it is among blacks.[23] At least one of the reasons for this appears to be language difficulties which impede the communication and receiving of new knowledge but may be overcome by extensive personalized interaction.[24] Paraprofessionals thus appear to have had considerable success in their efforts to carry out the planned goals of the Cornell OEO Project. One unplanned consequence of personalized interaction, namely, changes in involvement, will be examined next.

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22. Selected statements of interviewed homemakers, April-May, 1970, personal interviews.
23. For the majority of black homemakers (eighty-five percent in the high personalized interaction group and eight percent in the low personalized interaction group), changes in knowledge seem likely to occur regardless of the extent of exposure to personalized interaction. For Spanish-American homemakers, changes in knowledge occurred for eighty percent of homemakers in the high personalized interaction group and only thirty-two percent of those in the low personalized interaction group. Chi square values identify this as a statistically significant difference.
24. Among Spanish-speaking homemakers, only nine percent in the low personalized interaction group showed changes in knowledge but sixty-two percent of of homemakers in the high group showed change.

Personalized Interaction and Changes in Involvement

It was expected that homemakers with high exposure to personalized interaction would show increases in involvement[25] more frequently than those with low exposure to personalized interaction. Table 3 shows that fifty-eight percent of the homemakers in the high personalized interaction became more involved, compared with fifteen percent of the low personalized interaction group. Support is thus provided for the hypothesis.

Table 3 Changes in involvement and exposure to personalized interaction for homemakers in Sample One

Changes in Involvement	Exposure to Personalized Interaction		
	High	Low	Total
Yes - more involved now	58.6% (17)	15.8% (3)	41.7% (20)
No - but already involved	31.0 (9)	52.6 (10)	39.6 (19)
No - is not involved	10.3 (3)	31.6 (6)	18.8 (9)
Total	100.0 (29)	100.0 (19)	100.0 (48)

$X^2 = 9.1672$; d.f. = 2; $p < .05$

Since the hypothesized relationship between personalized interaction and increases in homemaker involvement is based on the assumption that encouraging involvement is one part of personalized interaction, the relationship described in Table 3 was reexamined, excluding those who were not encouraged to participate. Although the number of cases is too small to permit meaningful statistical analysis, Table 4 shows that a similar pattern of relationship is obtained.

25. The variable involvement refers to the degree to which respondents participate in community organizations and activities. Any evidence of new participation such as going to meetings or running for office was interpreted as increased involvement.

Table 4 Changes in involvement and exposure to personalized interaction for homemakers in Sample One who were encouraged by Family Assistants to participate

Changes in Involvement	Exposure to Personalized Interaction		
	High	Low	Total
Yes - more involved now	66.7% (16)	20.2% (3)	48.7% (19)
No - but already involved	20.8 (5)	53.3 (8)	33.3 (13)
No - is not involved	12.5 (3)	26.7 (4)	18.0 (7)
Total	100.0 (24)	100.0 (15)	100.0 (39)

Since involvement has been defined broadly to include participation in any organized community activity, it will be helpful to examine the different types of involvement.[26] Table 5 outlines the basic pattern of relationship between personalized interaction and type of involvement (for homemakers in Sample One who were encouraged to participate). Although the small number of cases makes any interpretation tentative, it appears that homemakers in the low personalized interaction group who became more involved tend to engage in "self-help" rather than "community" activities, while homemakers in the high personalized interaction group are more likely to become involved in community activities.

26. Type of organizational involvement was coded in the following manner. Increased or new involvement in organizations such as the PTA, Church, Reformed Democrats or Tenants Association, as well as voting, was coded as "community." Other organizational activity, such as use of the Consumer Club, going to Senior Citizens or to school to learn English, and getting children into local programs, was coded as "self-help" since participation in these activities is more directly of benefit to the individual or her family.

Table 5 Type of involvement and exposure to personalized interaction for homemakers in Sample One who were encouraged by Family Assistants to participate

Type of Involvement	Exposure to Personalized Interaction		
	High	Low	Total
"Community"	50.0% (12)	6.2% (1)	32.5% (13)
"Self-help"	20.8 (5)	18.8 (3)	20.0 (8)
No change reported	29.2 (7)	75.0 (12)	47.5 (19)
Total	100.0 (24)	100.0 (16)	100.0 (40)

In general, data in Tables 3, 4, and 5 support the hypothesis that personalized interaction between Family Assistants and homemakers leads to increases in involvement of homemakers in community affairs. The same association is found among interviewed homemakers (Sample Two).[27] The hypothesized relationship is further supported by the experience of Project personnel. Family Assistants and staff members who volunteered to participate in a voter registration drive in the community encountered many closed doors and uninterested neighbors. In contrast, Family Assistants had considerable success convincing homemakers with whom they had established personal relationships that they should register and vote.[28]

27. Almost half of the interviewed homemakers in the high personalized interaction group showed changes in involvement (seven out of fifteen), compared with only one of the seven homemakers receiving low personalized interaction. With respect to type of involvement, five of the seven homemakers in the high personalized interaction group who were encouraged to participate and whose involvement increased, began participating in "community" organizations. It was not possible to analyze type of involvement for the low personalized interaction group because data were available for only one case.

28. Information based on personal experience of the author and conversations with Family Assistants.

Controlling for ethnic group appears to alter the basic relationship between changes in involvement and personalized interaction. Among black homemakers who were encouraged to participate, ten of the twelve women in the high personalized interaction group (eighty-three percent) showed increases in involvement while only two of the eight women in the low personalized interaction group (twenty-five percent) became more involved. In contrast, almost half of the Spanish-American homemakers in the high personalized interaction group who were encouraged to participate became more involved, compared with twenty percent of those in the low personalized interaction group. Black homemakers appear, then, to respond more frequently to efforts to involve them in community affairs than do Spanish-Americans.

Even greater differences in rates of involvement occur between blacks and Spanish-Americans as a whole (both those encouraged and not encouraged to participate), because Spanish-American homemakers were less often encouraged to participate in the first place. Sixty-eight percent of black homemakers were encouraged to participate, compared with thirty-two percent of Spanish-American homemakers.

Controlling for family situation variables reveals that high personalized interaction is associated with greater involvement in both male and female headed households, and especially in the latter where eight out of nine homemakers became more involved.[29] It may be that the personal relationship with a Family Assistant is particularly important to women who are heads of households in providing encouragement and linkages to the community as a whole.

Implications and Conclusions

In terms of research approach, this study demonstrates the need for flexibility so that evaluation may be extended beyond the scope of the primary purposes of a program of planned change. Most social action programs have multiple objectives, some of which may be ambiguous and some of which may not be recognized or shared by all those administering the program. Unplanned consequences worthy of study may emerge as the program proceeds.

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29. Similar results were found using welfare status as a control variable. Being a welfare recipient does not in itself appear to be an impediment to changes in involvement. Twelve of the sixteen welfare recipients in the high personalized interaction group who were encouraged to participate showed greater involvement.

They may be discovered only if they are looked for and attempts are made to measure them. Only through such efforts can all of the factors associated with social change be identified and utilized to make programs of planned change more effective.

In this research, the findings on changes in involvement represent consequences unforeseen by the original program design. They demonstrate that programs primarily designed to have paraprofessionals communicate knowledge can have far broader impact, both on the contacted individuals and on their community involvement (a factor intimately associated with community development).

The research findings support the hypotheses. Changes in both knowledge and involvement occur more frequently among homemakers who have high exposure to personalized interaction. Personalized interaction seems to be a significant stimulus to change, perhaps because it involves paraprofessionals who are closer to the people, more sensitive to their problems, and better able to establish rapport than professional outsiders. This has implications for program planning for it demonstrates that paraprofessionals can have a very important role in the dynamics of social change. By recognizing their potential contributions, programs of planned change may have new opportunities for success.